



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

DATE: September 2006

TO: School District Administrators, School Building Principals, Wisconsin PTA

FROM: Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

SUBJECT: 2006 Wisconsin Family Day Initiative

To highlight the critical role that family involvement can have in a young person's life, the Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin PTA, and Wisconsin Family and Consumer Educators are promoting the Family Day initiative, a national event. The kick-off event is *Wisconsin Family Day – A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children*, scheduled for Monday, September 25, 2006. The Wisconsin Family Day initiative is meant to encourage parents to take an active role in their children's lives through eating dinner together regularly. Wisconsin Family Day is a great opportunity for schools to honor parents and increase parental participation in the education of their children.

Making time at the start of a new school year to promote the Family Day initiative can be challenging. If timing doesn't allow your school to promote this event on September 25, have your own kick-off on a later date. The important thing is to encourage ongoing parental involvement throughout the busy school year, which can be a simple, yet effective way of reminding parents of the incredible power they have in helping their children make healthy choices. Frequent family dinners, although not a cure-all, can be an effective strategy to reduce risky behaviors of students and improve academic performance and health. Based on research by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, frequent family dinners can have a powerful impact on a young person's life. The research has consistently shown that children who eat dinner with their parents on a regular basis are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, including the use of illegal drugs, smoking, drinking, and violence. Frequent family dinners also have been correlated with good academic performance and healthy eating behaviors.

Steps schools can take to promote this event include distributing information about Family Day to parents, asking students to write essays addressing the importance of parents, and hosting events, such as forums on parenting and substance abuse prevention and cooking classes for children. Other ideas include encouraging the PTA or other parent-teacher organizations in your school to adopt and publicize events that engage parents and provide a Family Day meal for children who don't have families.

For a brochure on family involvement and easy dinner ideas, see the DPI Bright Beginnings/Family-Community-School Partnership Team Nutrition website, www.dpi.wi.gov/ne/tn.html. Feel free to copy and distribute the brochure as needed. For more information about school support for this initiative, go to www.casacolumbia.org.

For questions about the initiative or other resources related to parental involvement and positive youth development strategies, contact Pam Kanikula, ATODA Program Consultant, at 608/266-7051 or pamela.kanikula@dpi.state.wi.us, or Jill Camber Davidson, DPI Nutrition Education Consultant (608-267-9120 or jill.camberdavidson@dpi.state.wi.us

Thank you for your assistance in recognizing this important initiative.

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